

# Bodywork: Discomfort and Existence

Pina Bausch, Shannon Cartier Lucy, Jordan Casteel, Aaron Garber-Maikovska, Sayre Gomez, Johannes Kahrs, Bruce Nauman, Carol Rama, Kathleen Ryan, Kaari Upson

MASSIMODECARLO presents *Bodywork: Discomfort and Existence*, a group exhibition that brings together the work of contemporary artists Shannon Cartier Lucy, Jordan Casteel, Aaron Garber-Maikovska, Sayre Gomez, Johannes Kahrs, Kathleen Ryan and Kaari Upson, along with important pieces primarily from the 1960s-1980s: video works by performance artist Bruce Nauman, choreographer Pina Bausch, and works on paper by Carol Rama.

The juxtaposition of these various positions from different places and contexts enables to understand the shared impulses and artistic visions based on the use of body as an influence and instrument for painting, sculpture and performance art, as well as the role of body as an object of analysis and a tool to understand structures of power and social relationships.

*Bodywork: Discomfort and Existence* maps the current existential discomfort, looking at spaces that bodies occupy. This past year, our ways of seeing ourselves, our lifestyles and ideas have profoundly changed. This exhibition starts with the actual discomfort of our body related to the present living, intimately and within society. The body is therefore subject: body meant as the element that helps us in setting a relation with the surrounding context, and the body that is living its own time by itself. The complexity of the exhibition, with its multifaceted identity, poses a set of questions, rather than trying to give answers.

The centrality of video and dance within the exhibition brings the attention back to the ephemeral, mortality, and the intermixing of cultural disciplines. In the 1960s, artists rejected established limits in all artistic disciplines in search for unmediated experience. Theatre, visual art, painting and sculpture were dismissed by artists working with body in time and space. Using his physical body to explore limits of everyday conditions, Bruce Nauman explored video as a theatrical stage and a surveillance device. In *Wall/Floor Positions* (1968), Nauman uses his body to explore the space of the room, turning it into a sort of yardstick to investigate and measure the dimensions of the space.

Similarly, Pina Bausch explores limits of materiality and bodies by unbuilding corporal stereotypes. Within the extract from *Un jour Pina a demandé*, directed by Chantal Akerman in 1983, dancers repeatedly connect irreconcilable dimensions and dismantle corporal stereotypes, traditional structures and gender roles. With her *Tanztheater*, the German choreographer generated new ways to think space, time and movement, with a hybrid language that deal with psychological trauma and social interactions.

The events of the body are at the core of the work of the other artists on display, arranged according to their diverse sensibilities and ideas. Somatic is Aaron Garber-Maikovska's preferred descriptor in this instance, with Garber-Maikovska's oeuvre situated in an interstice between movement, dance, language, painting and performance; it is ultimately the body that his art relates back to. By using his own body as a site of investigation, his works can be conceived as a means of documentation for muscle memory. '*Body and stain are always in my work*' states Kaari Upson, whose two busts on show are ambiguous portraits of the women that defines Upson's world, that often refers to her matriarchal lineage as a main source of inspiration. Each of these faces is cast, enlarged, and thickly painted, and pressed so that the paint smudges and melds. A central theme in Johannes Kahrs work is the representation of human body. In *Untitled (pink nude)* (2013), for example, the corporality is sectioned with fetishist care, and the fragmentation of the body challenges our ability to observe, questioning reality by revealing its physicality, perturbation and its violent sensuality.

Shannon Cartier Lucy, Jordan Casteel and Kathleen Ryan explore the concept of body through different media and styles. Ryan's sculptures are rich in physicality, made by several found objects made spectacular, often in contrast with the subjects they represent: a candid and light lemon is rendered with heavy stones, marble and rocks, among others materials, becoming a dynamic allegory for decadence and the cycle of life. Through their paintings, Cartier Lucy and Casteel express the different ways of living socially: the clear and melancholic domestic reality of Cartier Lucy contrasts with the larger than life portraits by Casteel, who roots her practice in community engagement. The feeling of solitude and nostalgia that characterises Cartier Lucy's work also emerges in the work by Sayre Gomez, whose trompe-l'oeil closed door becomes a metaphor of distance and immobility in contrast to the extremely touchable.

Finally, the dark composition of each work by Carol Rama presents disturbed representations of the human body and unleash a frenetic energy. By liberating them from cultural norms and preconceptions, the distorted bodies compel to reconsider the beauty of the male and female forms.

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**Pina Bausch** was born in Solingen, Germany, in 1940, and died in Wuppertal, Germany, in 2009. She studied at the Folkwang School, Essen, under Kurt Jooss. Starting from 1973, Pina Bausch was director of the Tanztheater Wuppertal for over 35 years. During this time, she made over 40 productions, many of which have travelled throughout the world, providing to the company international recognition. Awarded some of the greatest prizes world-wide, Pina Bausch is one of the all-time most important choreographers, who shaped contemporary dance and theatre development.

**Jordan Casteel** was born in Denver, Colorado, in 1989. She lives and works in New York. Solo exhibitions include: *Within Reach*, New Museum, New York (2020); *Returning the Gaze*, Denver Art Museum (2019) and Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University (2019–20). She has participated in group exhibitions at institutions such as SFMoMA, San Francisco (2020); MCA, Chicago (2020); Aishti Foundation, Beirut (2019); MoCA, Los Angeles (2018); The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2017; 2016). Her work is represented in several private and public collections such as The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; MoCA, Los Angeles, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; SFMoMA, San Francisco.

**Shannon Cartier Lucy** was born in 1977, in Nashville, Tennessee, where she currently lives and works. Recent solo exhibitions include: *The ever-flashing strap*, Nina Johnson Gallery, Miami (2020); *Woman with Machete*, de boer, Los Angeles (2020); *Home is a Crossword Puzzle I Can't Solve*, Lubov, New York (2020). She also has exhibited at Kathleen Cullen Gallery, New York (2009); David Gallery, Nashville, Tennessee (2008); Cynthia Broan Gallery, New York (2007); Team Gallery, New York (2000).

**Aaron Garber-Maikovska** was born in Washington D.C. in 1978. He lives and works in Los Angeles. Recent solo exhibitions have been held at Blum & Poe, Los Angeles (2020); C L E A R I N G, Brooklyn, New York (2018); Standard, Oslo (2015). He participated in recent group exhibitions at Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C. (2019); Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, Denver (2016). His work is represented in private and public collections such as: Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.; LACMA, Los Angeles; Pérez Art Museum, Miami; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

**Sayre Gomez** was born in Chicago in 1982. He lives and works in Los Angeles. He recently has exhibited at François Ghebaly, Los Angeles (2019); Galerie Nagel/Draxler, Berlin (2018); Galerie Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels (2016). He has participated in group exhibitions at institutions such as MAKI Collection, Tokyo (2020); Yuz Museum, Shanghai (2019); Arsenal Contemporary, Montreal (2019); Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Detroit (2017). His work is held in the permanent collections of the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Arsenal Contemporary, Montreal; and the Rubell Family Collection, Miami.

**Johannes Kahrs** was born in Bremen, Germany, in 1965. He lives and works in Berlin. He has exhibited extensively including recent solo exhibitions at Hall Art Foundation | Schloss Derneburg Museum, Derneburg (2020); FRAC Île-de-France, Paris (2016); Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Nuremberg (2014); Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden (2013). Group exhibitions have been held at National Portrait Gallery, London (2018); Lyon Biennial, Lyon (2015); SFMoMA, San Francisco (2009); Manifesta, San Sebastian (2004). His work is held in major museum collections such as: Centre Pompidou, Paris; MOCA, Los Angeles; Museu Serralves, Porto; SFMoMA, San Francisco; UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; MoMA, New York.

**Bruce Nauman** was born in 1941 in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He currently lives and works in Galisteo, New Mexico. His first solo show dates back to 1966 at Nicolas Wilder Gallery in Los Angeles. In 1999 he received the Golden Lion as best artist at the Venice Biennale. In 2009 he represented the United States at 53rd Venice Biennale and won the prize for best national participation. Recent exhibitions dedicated to his work include those at: Copenhagen Contemporary (2016); Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris (2015); ICA, London (2012); MoMA, New York (2010).

**Carol Rama** was born in 1918 in Turin, Italy, where she died in 2015. She began her artistic production in the mid-1930s. In 2003, she was awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at 50th Venice Biennale. Recent exhibitions dedicated to her work include those at: Palazzo Ducale, Genoa (2008); Ulmer Museum, Ulm (2004–05); Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; MART, Rovereto (2004). A retrospective on her work was held at Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona; Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris; Espoo Museum of Modern Art, Finland; Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin (2014–2016).

**Kathleen Ryan** was born in Los Angeles in 1984. She lives and works in New York. She has held institutional solo exhibitions at New Art Gallery, Walsall, UK (2019); MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, USA (2019); Cc Foundation & Art Centre, Shanghai (2018); and the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (2017). Her work is held in public collections including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; and the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles.

**Kaari Upson** was born in San Bernadino, California, in 1972. She lives and works in Los Angeles. She has exhibited extensively including recent solo exhibitions at Kunstverein Hannover, Hannover (2019); Kunsthalle Basel, Basel (2019); and New Museum, New York (2017). She has participated in numerous group exhibitions including the 58th Venice Biennale (2019); Whitney Biennial, New York (2017); 15th Istanbul Biennial (2017). Her work is represented in several private and public collections such as Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; MoMA, New York; Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar; Whitney Museum, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.